

THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Couper.*



AT THE FOUNTAIN.

TOO SOON.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—URSULA'S WALK THROUGH OLD ROME.

It has often been said before, but it is always said truly, that no one ever sends away an unsatisfactory letter without repenting it—that is, sends it to a person whose sympathy with the writer is of a nature to give him or her insight into the mood which governs the letter in question. It is also true that a woman's letter, supposing her to be simple and un-

worldly, is like a photograph, and reveals far more of the real nature of the writer than she can reveal in speech. There is no shyness, no restraining personal atmosphere to struggle against; she gives up the rein to that which is innate, and it speaks fearlessly; and for this reason a woman, far more than a man, has reason to repent the sending off hastily a letter which may give pain.

Ursula's letter was not truthful as to her real feelings, but it was, on the whole, a faithful reflex of

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the unreal, self-deceiving state of her mind—the very writing it cleared away some of the mist that had been troubling her.

All through the night she lay listening to the rain, and as each hour passed, repenting her haste more and more. She almost resolved to write again when morning came. Would morning ever come? The night was dark, and the rain was disturbing. When at last Ursula got some feverish sleep, it was only to dream that she had made her husband angry.

At last she slumbered heavily, and then, with a sudden start, she felt as if, unless she got to Michael that instant, she must be parted from him for ever. It seemed to her that he was close by, but Rachel Fraser stood between them and hid Ursula from him. She pushed vehemently forward, and then she saw Miss Fraser raise her large white hand, and felt it strike her shoulder heavily. Again and again the blow fell, and as Ursula struggled forward she started awake. Carlotta was beating away at the door, and her room was full of daylight. It was such happy relief to find that all had been a dream; and yet, as her thoughts wakened fully, and pieced memory together, the remembrance of the letter came with a sense like torture. Every word seemed distorted and chilled into ice. How could she write again, with nothing happening between to account for her change of manner. Her pride would not let her see that penitence might sufficiently explain the change.

"No! I will not write." She hurried on her dressing. If she could only get to the world outside, she thought she could shake off this torture. "I have killed any chance I had left of happiness. Michael has left off loving me, that is plain, or he would never have written to me through a woman I so dislike, and my letter justifies every word she may say against me."

"Of course Miss Fraser says I am cold-hearted; well, she has had nothing but coldness from me. What does it matter what they say?" she ended passionately; "my life is over, for misery is not life."

She determined to start at once for a walk. She forgot her father's proposal to take Carlotta with her. When the girl proposed to get her some breakfast, Ursula refused, and sent her away, so that she might escape without further remonstrance.

She had studied a map of the city, and she found her way through the narrow, dirty streets without much trouble. Even in the fresh morning air, it seemed to her that there was a close, foul atmosphere around her. But the city was already stirring and noisy. There were men's voices calling out their wares for sale in such a Babel of sound that it was impossible to distinguish what they said; some children screamed out loudly from one of the low-browed shops, and from the upper window a bare-headed woman stared vacantly at Ursula.

Mr. Williams's lodging was near the Piazza Trajano, so that Ursula's nearest way lay across the Forum. She had no guide to point out the various points of interest, but she stopped and gazed at the three beautiful Corinthian columns, and for the moment her old enthusiasm returned. She felt inclined to stay and explore here before she went on.

"But no, I always said I would see the Coliseum before anything else."

She went on through the Campo Vaccino, and on every side she saw ruins full of interest. Some, as the

Basilica of Constantine, she knew from pictures, but others she longed to inquire about. She turned away, but farther on she stopped at the sound of singing. Close beside her, near an arch which she guessed to be the arch of Titus, sat a bright-eyed, dirty-looking cobbler, with a row of much worn boots and shoes beside him, and pulling out his waxed thread in time to his recitation; his utterance was very striking, and his voice rich and musical; and as Ursula looked at him she made out that he was describing himself in his improvised song. She blushed and hurried on, eager to reach the Coliseum, for she knew that the huge mass of black ruin she was approaching must be the object of her quest.

She had created it to herself so much more vast and imposing, that at first she felt disappointed; but after awhile, the desolate repose of those grey, shattered arches became awful to gaze on; the gloom even in daylight that seemed to hang over the place impressed her. She turned away shuddering.

"Why is it that old ruined places have so much power to affect us compared with those that are more modern? Is it wholly from association? But then I came here full of recollections of gladiators and early Christians flung to the lions; dying men and women; triumphs of imperial cruelty and heroic endurance; and yet I was not impressed at first. It is the venerable majesty of these old stones, so helpless in their decay, that touches me. It is like King Lear, or any other ruined power, it makes one so mournfully tender."

So far her excursion had done her good; it had taken her out of the circle of self and restricted thought in which she had been living. But, unfortunately, memory went back to that first meeting with Michael in the Museum. He had described the Coliseum to her, and as she looked round once more at the desolate weed-grown circle, tender flowers clinging here and there to the grey, ruined arches, it seemed to her that his description had been wonderfully prosaic.

"Was I blind, then?" she said. "Is this matter-of-fact comprehension of me, which supposes I can be put in a shape like jelly, and after due coercion come out after the pattern of Rachel Fraser, or any other ordinary commonplace woman, an indication of what Michael really is? And have I been blind till now? I have read that women worship idols of their own creation, and set the clay monsters on pedestals; and then when they fall, like Humpty Dumpty, there is an end of them; but I can never be like that. I may have idolised Michael; I may have transfigured him in my love; but I can't help it now. The love is there, must be there always, and this doubles my misery, because it makes the rest of life an endless craving for that which I can never have."

She turned sharply, with a weary look on her face that was pitiful to see there. Ursula still looked hardly more than seventeen, though these last weeks had robbed her forehead of its smoothness. She walked on rapidly, heedless of where she went, wholly forgetful of her resolve to return before the sun got full power. It was blazing fiercely by the time she reached one of the city gates. She stood still and looked before her. In the distance were purple mountains with white summits, which she guessed must be perpetual snow, but as far as she could see on every side were ruins—aqueducts stretching out as if to reach the mountains, temples, broken columns, fragments of brickwork with long rampant grass waving atop. Here and there a clump of blue-green

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pines with crimson branches broke up the picturesque waste. Nearer—stretched out between the city walls and this wild expanse—was a cobweb of narrow streets and lanes so intricate-looking that she hesitated to penetrate among them, fearing to trust herself lest she might lose her way. But the idea of escape from the city itself grew strong as she gazed, and she went on hurriedly, quickening her pace as she glanced upward and saw how high the sun was already.

The little streets were narrow and dirty, and she hurried till she reached a lane running between kitchen gardens, where cabbages and broccoli made themselves apparent by smell as well as sight. Tall sedges fringed the sides of the lane, standing erect with sharply pointed leaves; but Ursula hurried on, she wanted to be free of these fences and to reach the open ground of the Campagna.

She was becoming exhausted with the heat, and went on blindly, scarcely vouchsafing a glance at the luxuriant and trim kitchen gardens with their glowing wealth of flowers.

At last she reached open ground, but it was very broken, and fatiguing to walk over. She stumbled more than once on fragments of carved stone and brick. She felt ready to sink with exhaustion. Presently, on before her, she saw a grove of trees, and she hastened eagerly to reach it. She found herself in a green valley, grassed over with thick damp turf. Above was a grove of evergreen oaks which gave a gloomy shadow. On one side was an opening in the high bank, and passing through this, Ursula found herself in a damp grotto, green with moss that seemed to have been undisturbed for centuries. She shivered at the sudden chill of the cool ancient place; she remembered all about it, and was glad to have found her way there, but she was too exhausted to explore or enjoy her discovery.

As long as she had toiled on rapidly in the burning sunshine she had not realised her fatigue, but the anxiety and exhaustion she had undergone, and her sleepless night, had entirely enervated her youthful strength. She sank down on the broken steps utterly weary, and rested her head on her hands. She tried to remember all she had read about the grotto, and while she was striving to realise the nymph Egeria as a form of human loveliness, gradually the place grew indistinct. There was not a sound to disturb repose; no insect's hum reached through the heavy, damp atmosphere, and Ursula's head drooped more and more heavily till she was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—STRUCK DOWN.

URSULA waked with a start. She felt numb and chilled, and she could not remember where she was. After a minute or two she rose up and went to the entrance of the grotto. She had forgotten her watch, but the changed light showed that she had slept for several hours, and she turned sick as she remembered that Doctor Upoli had told her especially to avoid damp localities. She felt faint and giddy, but she only thought how she could get home quickest; she had been so absorbed as she entered the valley, that she had no distinct remembrance of the way by which she had come. Mechanically she found the sedge-bordered lane. It seemed to her, when she reached the narrow streets outside the walls, that they were more dirty and squalid than when she came through them in the morning. Half-

naked children were playing at the doors, figures of men and women stood about in groups that at another time would have roused Ursula to admiration; but her head ached with a dull pain that made every object an irritation. She tried to walk fast, but she could not; her limbs trembled, and seemed a weight to her as she moved them.

“Suppose I am going to be ill!” She smiled drearily. “Well, yesterday I was moaning over the probable length of my life. Suppose I am very ill and die, only my father will miss me. Michael”—her lips quivered, and she felt choked—“well, he will be sorry for a little, and then he will live alone with his cousin again, and wonder at his own folly in taking a foolish girl to trouble his decorous household. That woman”—she paused and drew her breath hard, with a look of repugnance in her eyes—“she will make no pretence of sorrow, for, with all her faults, she is not a hypocrite; she will rejoice. Well, in some ways it will disappoint her, for I know she likes to interfere and manage, but still she hates me, and I—oh! how I hate her.”

Her eyes flashed, the colour flew into her face, and she clenched her hand nervously, and then the thought of her father calmed her. “I must live for him. I must go back to him. I will never leave him, no, never again.”

She had just reached the gate, and several people were coming out of the city. One of them stood still, and shading his eyes from the sunshine, looked first one way and then the other.

Ursula, confused and weary as she was, recognised her father before he saw her; but she could only totter up to him.

“Thank God! thank God!” he said, fervently, and then held her hand in both his, looking at her earnestly.

“My dear, where have you been? Have you had an accident? What has happened?” The questions came one on another, in true masculine fashion, and then, shocked at her pale, haggard face, he roused to full sympathy.

“My dear child,” he said, tenderly, “you look exhausted; take my arm and lean on me. You must be faint with hunger.”

It came to Ursula, for the first time, that she had not tasted food all day, but thought was growing more and more confused.

She took her father's arm. She did not mean to lean on it, but she did, and she could scarcely guide her steps. Objects began to swim as she dragged one leaden foot after another.

When at last the lodging was gained, and three inquisitive faces showed in the doorway, and three shrill tongues set up a vociferating chorus of wonder and welcome, Ursula's senses reeled. She looked feebly towards Carlotta and stretched out her arms—this was her last conscious act.

Her arms fell lifeless, her head drooped, and she was borne to her room like an infant in the arms of the padrona and her daughters.

CHAPTER XXXV.—A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

URSULA opened her eyes with a strange feeling of weakness; it seemed to her that the lids were too heavy to keep lifted. Memory began to struggle into life with the strange amount of effort which signifies that, like an infant, it has slept a long unconscious slumber.

Dim at first, but coming more clearly each moment, a vision rose before Ursula's eyes. She was at home in London. She could summon no memory of Michael, though she kept her eyes closed with a longing hope that his presence might mingle in her confused thoughts, but she was sure that Miss Fraser had been with her, and a shrinking fear and dislike made her sigh as she still lay with closed eyes.

She heard a slight movement near her, but she kept her eyes shut till all was again still. Then the heavy eyelids were raised, and Ursula looked round her. The room was the same which she had slept in since Aunt Sophy's death; there were the same meagre white curtains on each side of the bed, the same Indian screen, only it seemed to Ursula that this had been moved nearer the bed, so as to shelter it when the door opened.

"But this may be the dream," she thought, and again her eyes closed wearily; "and after all, perhaps I am at home."

She started at the sound of a voice. Was this a dream too?

"I tell you, doctor, I take the whole responsibility; Mrs. Helder shall not lose blood, she is as weak as water now."

A thrill went through Ursula, throbbing in every vein; it was Rachel Fraser's strong determined voice, but it did not stir up angry feeling. The next speaker did.

Ursula's imagination supplied Doctor Upoli's contortions and gestures. "It is impossible to believe in such infatuation; I affirm to the signora that she who is not the mother of the Signora Helder kills her deliberately by this interference; there is no way of subduing fever but by loss of blood."

Doctor Upoli came from behind the screen; he saw the change in Ursula's face, and he saw her newly-opened eyes. He stepped softly to the bedside with a smile on his face, but he did not speak; he wished to carry his point without disturbing Miss Fraser.

He held out his hand, and Ursula placed hers in it. It was such an effort to move her arm that she felt more puzzled than ever about herself.

"I have been ill, haven't I, doctor?" Her voice was like a far-off sound, so very feeble.

The doctor nodded gravely, he held up his finger to enjoin silence; but Rachel Fraser had heard the feeble utterance, and she came softly from behind the screen. She noticed the doctor's lifted finger, and she smiled at his hopes.

There was a softer look on the regular, handsome face than Ursula had ever seen there; it seemed to her, as Miss Fraser bent quickly forward, that there were tears gathering in the hard eyes.

"You have been very ill, my dear, and we must keep you very quiet; above all things, you must not get a chill."

She looked significantly at Ursula's arm, which lay outside the coverlet, while the doctor kept her hand in his.

"I will at least let the Signora Helder decide." The doctor kept his eyes earnestly on Ursula.

"You will do nothing of the sort, Doctor Upoli." Miss Fraser spoke very coolly. "I consider Mrs. Helder my patient, and I will not suffer violent remedies to be used in her case. And you see she is better."

Dr. Upoli's easy face grew flushed.

"Then I must tell the signora that if she refuses me the exercise of my profession, I must retire"

—his voice gradually became louder—"I cannot consent to neglect a means of health which I know to be necessary—I can even say, on which recovery may depend."

Miss Fraser kept calm and unmoved, but the doctor's face grew more and more excited. Ursula's large hollow eyes moved from one face to the other. She felt grateful to hear Miss Fraser say "Hush!" at Doctor Upoli's last sentence.

"Hush!" she repeated, calmly but imperatively. "Come with me if you please, signor, I will talk to you in the sala."

The doctor was forced to obey, but he followed swelling with indignation.

Directly he got into the room he ran up to Mr. Williams.

"Let the signor figure to himself"—his eyes seemed to be starting from their closely-fitting lids—"that the signora deprives me of my functions. That lady teaches me my profession"—he struck time with his great sausage-like forefinger on Mr. Williams's coat—"forbids me, Iachimo Upoli, to bleed a patient for fever. In your cold, damp fog of an island—what know I?—it may be right to avoid blood-letting; but here, where one cause of fever is a check which the blood has received, life depends on the withdrawal of the congested fluid, which this signora"—he turned to dart a look of scorn on Miss Fraser, but she had departed.

Mr. Williams looked anxious and doubtful, but already the self-reliant helpfulness of Miss Fraser had impressed him, and Doctor Upoli's excitement was not reassuring.

"I believe Miss Fraser is very clever," he said. "In this case she is right; in England we never bleed for fever. It was the old-fashioned plan, but no one thinks of it nowadays."

Doctor Upoli threw up both hands.

"Fashion in disease!—fashion in a plain law of nature! Excuse me, signor, but I can no longer visit your daughter, though it pains me to leave her in such hands. I tell you frankly I have no hope for my patient unless you send that obstinate signora back to England."

Mr. Williams bowed, but he was not in spirits to continue the discussion.

"How did you find my daughter to-day?" he asked. "Is she still unconscious?"

"She is awake, but"—he shrugged his shoulders with emphasis—"I have the honour to bid the signor farewell."

He made a low bow, and departed.

Doctor Upoli had succeeded in making Ursula's father very anxious and uncomfortable. He stole cautiously to the door of the sick-room. The door was ajar. Going in and keeping behind the tall screen, he heard Ursula's voice; it sounded feeble and weak, but the sound gave the poor bereaved man fresh life. It had seemed to him in these last days as if his only tie to earth were snapped—that there was no one left to live for. Tears sprang to his eyes, and his heart went out in fervent thankfulness for the precious life restored. In that moment his child was dearer to him than she had ever been.

Ursula looked at Miss Fraser in wonder.

"How did you come here?" she said.

"I came to see if I could be of use to you and your father"—Miss Fraser spoke in a quiet yet cheerful voice; all her hardness had fled—"and I found you very ill. I am so glad to be here."

"You have been very kind to me, I am sure, though I have been unconscious of it." Ursula smiled and put out her hand.

Miss Fraser pressed it gently, and then she went to get some broth.

"I wonder she did not kiss me," Ursula thought; but Miss Fraser had seen the quivering lips and the suddenly dilated eyes, and she thought that Ursula was best left alone.

Rachel Fraser felt compassionate and softened, and as she watched the patience with which the girl bore her extreme weakness, she grew almost affectionate; and Ursula's gratitude to her skilful, unwearying nurse broke through her reserve, and sometimes startled the strong-minded woman by its impulsive expression. But still Michael's cousin could not wholly love his wife, or if she did love her, she struggled against the feeling.

Ursula had not named her husband since that first day, then Rachel began by saying Michael was much better. "Has he been told of my illness?"

"No, not yet, my dear; at least, I did not tell him how very ill you have been."

Miss Fraser did not say that if Ursula had not recovered consciousness on that morning, she had determined to summon her cousin; she grew first surprised and then impatient at the young wife's silence about her husband.

As Miss Fraser sat beside her, Ursula spoke constantly of her father; her face brightened when he came into the room; his happiness and his comfort appeared to be her absorbing thought.

Miss Fraser grew graver and graver, and when she was alone she shook her head very anxiously indeed. "It is very sad. I am afraid that marriage was a thorough mistake on both sides; she is quite happy to be with her father, and I don't think poor dear Michael is happy at all." In which remark Miss Fraser showed that strength of mind is not the only requisite for the gift of reading human nature. "When we get her up and she gains strength I shall speak out," she said; "if she doesn't know her duty as a wife, she must be taught it; she is only a child, after all, and in one way I was wrong about her; she can be gentle and lovable when she chooses."

CHAPTER XXXVI.—RECOVERY.

In a few days Ursula had made rapid progress; her youth and good health battled vigorously against the fever; but still it lingered, although now in a more intermittent form.

"She will not gain strength till we get her out of Rome," Miss Fraser said one morning; "I believe we are about the only reasonable people left in the city; you ought to have left a month ago, you know." She gave Mr. Williams a sharp glance of reproof.

"We will go anywhere you please," he said, humbly; "only tell me what to do."

Miss Fraser smiled graciously. Excepting Michael Helder, whose will was the law of her life, she liked men to submit to her judgment, and she thought Mr. Williams showed much common sense in knowing when he was in good hands.

"Your padrona, as the people call her, tells me she has a sister at Albano who will let us have part of a villa there; she says there is a pleasant garden, and this would be excellent for Ursula. What do you say? She is not sure about the rent, but she thinks it would be much the same that you pay here."

Mr. Williams looked at her gratefully. Miss Fraser was not another Sophy; no one could ever smooth away the thorns and briers of life as she had smoothed them; but after the misery of this desolate time it was very comforting to feel that an experienced steerswoman was at his side ready to take the trouble of guidance from his thoughts.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said; "why should not you and Ursula go at once? I have a few days' work here, arrears which have accumulated under this sad trouble. I will join you as soon as possible."

"Very well." Miss Fraser smiled cheerfully. "If you don't join us by the end of the week I shall have to come over and fetch you."

She nodded and went back to her patient.

"If such a person could arrange for one without being with one," said the student, thoughtfully, "such help would be invaluable;" and then Mr. Williams leaned his head on his hand, and mused over the sweet tenderness of his dead wife, and the devotion of her gentle, unselfish sister.

"Women—some women, are very nearly angels," he thought, and then he wondered how it was with Michael and Ursula. He had been surprised to see Miss Fraser arrive in place of Michael Helder, but anxiety for Ursula had superseded all minor thoughts. Now he wondered again at Michael's absence, and an uneasy disquiet arose lest his child's happiness was not as secure as he had fancied. Had he been to blame for hurrying the marriage? Were these two unsuited to each other?

He resolved to question Ursula, if he found her as much better as he hoped when he reached the villa.

The idea of change delighted Ursula, and seemed to give her new life. She had grown very weary of the monotony of her sick-room. Michael had written her a few lines expressing sorrow and anxiety for her illness, and hoping soon to hear she was quite recovered; but it seemed to Ursula that his letter was cold and formal, and might have been written to any one else.

Every day that she grew better, and was more able to think, she grew more depressed, and it was this change which had made Miss Fraser urge the necessity of a speedy change of scene, for she watched Ursula devotedly. She had learned during the days that had followed Michael's return home, how very dear his wife was to him, and Ursula was now to her a part of Michael's happiness.

Miss Fraser rejoiced when she saw the bright flush of pleasure her plan brought to the girl's face, and her eagerness to set out.

"I believe you are better already," she said, next day, when she had placed Ursula, carefully wrapped, in the carriage which was to take them to the villa, and took her place beside her.

Ursula laughed.

"Oh, yes, I feel just as I used to feel years ago when we were going to the sea. I did not care for the place we were going to, but the idea of change was delightful."

"Yes, but you will like Albano for itself, I expect, or at least the villa, for I hear it is rather isolated, and has large grounds attached to it; the padrona told me the nightingales sing all day long in the trees there."

Ursula looked in wonder at her companion. Rachel Fraser thinking about nightingales!

"I suppose," Ursula thought, "one connects people with the locality they inhabit. Miss Fraser seems to me to belong to formal old Bloomsbury, and a nightingale would seem so strange in Bloomsbury." Aloud, she said, "Trees and nightingales! How delicious! It sounds delightful to look forward to a garden, with trees large enough for nightingales!"

She leaned back in the carriage. Miss Fraser had waited to start till the mid-day heat was over, but still the fresh air, and the variety of sights and sounds, made Ursula feel drowsy and exhausted. She closed her eyes, till an exclamation from her companion roused her.

Their carriage had drawn to one side of the road to give passage to a large waggon. The waggon was drawn by large cream-coloured oxen, with mild brown eyes. In the waggon were wine-casks, and the two drivers were singing in turn alternate verses of a love song. The bright trappings of the oxen, the merry faces of the men, and their gay dresses, gave a festive look to the party.

Ursula was enthusiastic with delight; she was sorry when the waggon was out of sight; but at a turn in the road they came upon a wayside fountain, grey and broken, but surrounded by a group of Roman girls laughing and chattering as each broad-chested damsel in turn bent to fill her graceful pitcher, and then poising it on her head, waited to form a line with her companions. When all the pitchers were filled, the black-eyed, straight-browed women marched off in procession with stately steps.

"Michael would have admired that group," said Miss Fraser.

Ursula was silent; she was striving to keep down her rising irritation. She felt it would be natural to talk about her husband, and she knew Miss Fraser was right, but still she did not choose her to speak of Michael's tastes in that special way; and then she leaned back again, and began to wonder whether the Miss Fraser she had got to like so much, and whose presence now seemed so necessary to her, would, when she no longer wanted tender nursing, change back into the cold woman she had so disliked.

She glanced towards her. Rachel's eyes were bent on her anxiously; there was in them, it seemed to Ursula, the same solicitude she had often seen in her Aunt Sophy's.

"What are you thinking of?" said the girl, mischievously, and then she did not wait to hear the answer. The road was bordered with trees, with flowery hedges below them; here and there, green vistas of shadow stretched away beneath other trees behind the hedges; a huge white goat was climbing up the bank below one of the trees, and trying to crop the flowers in the hedge. As the carriage came up he turned and gazed with great glassy eyes on Ursula, and shook his grey beard mournfully.

"Isn't he like a silly old man?" she laughed; "I wish I could draw, just to get his likeness."

"Michael would sketch him directly," said Miss Fraser.

Ursula bit her lip. In her heart, Michael was present at each of the pictures which had roused her enthusiasm, and if Miss Fraser had kept silence his name must have found its way to her lips; but every fresh reminder acted as a check. There was a slight frown on her pale face as she leaned forward to gaze after the goat.

Miss Fraser cleared her throat.

"Here comes a lecture," Ursula thought, but she kept her eyes gazing into vacancy, for the road had turned, and the goat was out of sight.

"You asked me just now what I was thinking of. I was thinking of you, and wondering at the little interest you take in your husband. Do you ever think of him?—you never mention his name."

The direct words wounded Ursula keenly. She sat upright in the carriage with flushed cheeks.

"Don't make me angry," she said. "You have been very kind to me, I should not like to be cross to you, and it is quite easy to make me cross, if you ask questions of that kind. How soon shall we get to the villa? I shall go to sleep till we do."

She looked very like a naughty child as she nestled herself in a corner of the carriage.

Miss Fraser frowned, pursed her lips together, fidgeted, and finally took a warmer shawl from the opposite seat and placed it over Ursula's knees.

"I am growing old and foolish, or else that child is desperately self-willed. Well, she's weak to-day, and extra tired. But I will speak when she is better, and I shall pay no attention to her nonsense. Poor, silly little thing! I can't help being fond of her in spite of her silliness."

THE NUPTIALS OF THE "SON OF HEAVEN."*

THE present dynasty on the throne of China is Manchu, and it is nearly two hundred years since a reigning emperor has been married, so that this event has caused great excitement, especially in the capital. The Manchu women have all large feet. It is against the law for a Manchu to marry a small-footed wife, hence no such deformity is ever seen within the palace, although the lesser wives of the mandarins are mostly small-footed women. There are in the palace about a thousand eunuchs, but not one of them is a Manchu; they are all Chinese, principally from the provinces of Shantung and Chi-li, and although from the very lowest ranks in life, some of them become immensely rich, and wield a mighty influence in the court. The late marriage has been a most exciting time for them, for the slightest hitch in the arrangements would have cost the chief ones concerned their heads. Great preparations have been going on for months, and presents and money pouring in from the eighteen provinces. It is said to have cost the country about five to six millions sterling, but a great deal of pressure was necessary to raise the amount; hence many seeds of dissatisfaction have been sown in the southern provinces, especially in the silk-growing districts.

The fifteenth of October was the lucky day appointed by the astronomical board for the celebration of the marriage. The emperor having attained the advanced age of seventeen years, it was considered about time he should assume the reins of government; but as a man in China only attains his majority when he gets married, hence the first step was to have this event solemnised. The empress-mother and empress-dowager should naturally withdraw from all affairs of state, and retire to a part of the palace allotted to them to spend the rest of

* We are indebted for this communication to an English lady at Peking.

their days in peace, but for various reasons this custom was departed from in this instance. The empress-dowager is much beloved by the emperor and the other members of the court, and has been a wise and good counsellor in times past, but the empress-mother is reported to be a dissolute woman with an ungovernable temper.

Peking comprises three cities—the Chinese city, where business is chiefly carried on; the Tartar city, and the Imperial. In the centre of the latter is the palace, surrounded by a wall and moat. It covers an area of about a mile long by about a mile and a half broad, but the pleasure-grounds and entrances cover more than twice this space. The palace buildings are large and roofed with yellow tiles, which is the Imperial colour, and in the sunlight gives a gorgeous effect to the scene. The Manchus live principally in the Tartar and Imperial cities, and are considered the emperor's bodyguard. They are divided into eight banners, and the soldiers belonging to the different banners are distinguished by the colour of the jackets they wear. They receive a small monthly allowance, and are not allowed to leave Peking without permission from the head of their banner; but, as in everything else in China, this is the theory, but the practice is very different, for under pretext of sickness or looking after his father's grave a man may be from home for years, provided he puts a substitute in his place. They never enter into business; in fact, an honest trade is despised by them as only fit for the Chinese to engage in.

A few days previous to the date of the marriage the gates of the palace were ornamented with festoons of green, yellow, blue, and red silk. This is the usual way of announcing to the public that a marriage is going to take place, and these decorations are allowed to hang for one day, but in the case of the emperor they were kept up for ten days. This ornament is composed of entire webs of silk, and is an expensive but tawdry affair. The same kind of festoons were put up over the gateway of the residence of the bride. Weeks before, the streets, which are usually in a most dilapidated state (for it is no uncommon thing during the wet season to have people drowned in the public thoroughfares), were overhauled and made to look wonderfully respectable. Barriers were put up to prevent carts from passing along, so that all traffic was confined to the sideways, except at certain crossings. Small mounds of yellow earth might be seen lying here and there all along the line of route in readiness to be scattered on the surface on the day of the marriage. The reason of this is, that the emperor is the Son of Heaven, and everything connected with him, even to the dust under his feet, must be yellow. With promotion looming in the distance, every mandarin was stimulated to do his utmost to give *éclat* to the day's proceedings.

The emperor can only marry one of his subjects, and the choice must be made from one of the eight banners, which are divided into three upper and five lower. If one suitable is not found in the three upper there is no alternative but to come to the lower grades. Three years ago this selection took place: the daughters of all the mandarins ranging from ten to seventeen years of age, had to appear as candidates for the distinction. They went into the palace about twelve at night, and remained till dawn. They were examined by the empresses, and from each lot

a few were selected to remain whom they considered superior in beauty and intelligence.

This honour is far from being coveted by the parents. Indeed, all are very unwilling to give their daughters into this living grave, as they are never allowed to revisit their homes again, or to see their father or any male relatives. At stated periods, however, the mother and sisters of the empress are allowed to visit her, but the fate of the others is very uncertain. It may happen that they are selected and presented as concubines to the princes. In this emergency all kinds of pretexts were resorted to by the parents, who sent to say to the mandarin in charge of the affair that their daughters were deformed, or had some slight defect in hearing, and therefore could not be suitable competitors for the honourable position of empress. The idea is that the empress must be perfect in person and family; that is, that her parents must be alive. Several selections took place, but the numbers were considered too few, and the elegance and beauty of the ladies not up to the highest type, although each time from two to three hundred were presented. In consequence of this the empresses gave orders that the lame, the blind, and the halt were to be brought in, and from this extraordinary lot one was chosen for empress who had spinal curvature, but a wonderfully bright, sweet face. Medical men were called in to cure her, but to no avail. As a last resource, a veterinary surgeon was resorted to, but under the harsh treatment to which the patient was subjected she died. Among the young ladies presented at court on these occasions it was no uncommon thing to find slight deformity in the back or shoulders, which deformity was adroitly manufactured by the aid of cotton wadding. If deafness was the defect fixed upon, a paper was sent in with the young lady to that effect, and of course her instructions were, when spoken to, to open her mouth and look as stupid as possible, amply verifying the saying, *None so deaf as those who do not want to hear*. This ruse succeeded admirably for two or three times, but when the opportunities for selecting were drawing to a close, little attention was paid to these drawbacks, the empresses trusting more to their own eyes than to the papers dictated by fond parents. After the death of the one just mentioned, the good luck fell on the present bride.

When the choice was finally decided, the lady was removed in a yellow chair from the palace, where she had been for some time under the constant eye of the empress, to a large residence on the north of the city, specially built for her accommodation, but which is to be given as a residence to the emperor's only sister, now about to be married. The future empress's mother was permitted to live with her, but her father was only allowed to pay daily visits. Six ladies of high rank were appointed by the emperor to visit the young lady and invite her mother to a feast, whilst the princes and several high mandarins invited the father to a similar entertainment. Before partaking of the viands, wine was poured out, and the father prostrated himself nine times, and the mother six times, which is the orthodox number for women. After the feast was over, the same ceremony was again repeated, and this may be called the betrothal. Some time after this two princes were appointed to carry the emperor's letter to the bride, and to convey the presents usually given on such occasions.

The procession was of the most imposing nature. The presents were carried on yellow pavilions draped with yellow brocaded satin; those containing the gifts of the empresses were carried on crimson poles, whilst those from the emperor were borne on yellow. The bearers wore crimson silk robes, and to each pavilion there were eight men with relays. The presents consisted of 200 taels of gold (a tael of gold is equal to £5 sterling), 10,000 taels of silver (a tael of silver is equal to 6s. 3d.), a gold teacup, 2 silver teacups, 2 silver wash-basins, 1,000 pieces of satin, 12 horses with red trappings, 32 with yellow, and 40 white without saddles, 20 coats of mail. For the

literary honours. The Manchus are not distinguished for their literary attainments. It may be from having to give so much time to military practice, for it is required of all graduates that they first pass in their examination of archery on horseback. If not proficient in this art they cannot go up for their doctor's degree. The idea is that his subjects must be alike elegant in letters and active on the battle-field. In consequence of this they are generally plucked by the Chinese graduates who come up from the eighteen provinces. This honourable degree is only conferred by the emperor once in three years, and out of the thousands who pour into the capital in hopes of obtaining this first of first doctors' degrees, only one can succeed, hence the successful candidate is looked on by the whole empire as a marvel of genius. The bride's grandfather has not distinguished himself as a man of letters, but he held a responsible position as commander of the forces in Qwang Si, in the early reign of Hien-Fung. Some thirty years ago, while in office, he allowed the rebels to cross his boundary into the neighbouring provinces, in consequence of which he was ordered to return to the capital, his honours and his office were taken from him, and his property confiscated. The present Tsang-li-yamen, or office for conducting foreign affairs, where our ministers are received and entertained, was his residence. Orders were also issued to have him beheaded, but this latter decree was rescinded on account of his age, and the difficulties of the position he held. In 1860, when the French and English troops were near Peking, he was again put in charge of the soldiers stationed on the city wall, but no sooner was the treaty signed than he again retired into oblivion. The general impression among the common people was that he had been beheaded, and great has been their astonishment when his name appeared in the "Gazette" (the Chinese "Court Journal"), in connection with the marriage of the emperor. His Manchu name is A-lu-Toh, and his honourable Chinese title is Tsai-shan-ah. The sons of Manchus never take the Chinese surname of their father, so that the father of the bride is called Chung Chi.

The daughters of Manchus have no names given them, hence the empress is styled the daughter of A-lu-Toh. Her father had paid great attention to her education, so that from a Chinese standpoint she is considered quite an accomplished lady. She has a long face and high cheek-bones, but with such vivacity in her eyes that the Chinese say she has two pupils. The wife of Choung-how, the ambassador who lately visited Europe and America, was appointed lady in waiting, and also instructress in the court etiquette. Besides the eunuchs, there are, for the purpose of waiting on the ladies of the court, young girls chosen for a term of ten years. On the emperor reaching the age of fourteen, two of these girls were given to him as concubines, or, as it was said, to wait on and amuse him. Report says a son was born to him by one, and a few days after his marriage a daughter was presented to him by the other. They will now take the position of secondary wives. In the harem, besides the empress there are six grades of wives. Three were taken into the palace in yellow carts, and by the back entrance, the day before his marriage, so as to be in readiness to receive and wait on the empress. One of these was aunt to the bride, and is described as very beautiful, but lacking in intelligence and education.



IMPERIAL UMBRELLA.

family use 100 taels of gold, 5,000 taels of silver, a gold cup, 2 silver cups, 1 silver basin, 500 pieces of silk, 1,000 pieces of calico, 6 horses, 1 coat of mail, a bow and arrows, 2 embroidered robes, 2 gauze, 2 fur robes, 22 sable robes, and 1 yellow girdle. All relations of the Imperial family wear yellow girdles. The street was lined off and guarded by soldiers, whilst barricades were put up at the ends of all the streets and lanes opening on the line of procession. On reaching the residence of the bride, the two princes in charge presented the gifts to the father and grandfather of the young lady, who received them kneeling, and prostrated themselves to the dust in token of their grateful acknowledgment for the honour put on the family.

The father of the bride obtained five years ago the distinction of chwang-yuen, or senior wrangler. He is the first Manchu who has obtained such high

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Two days before the marriage four of the highest mandarins were chosen by the emperor. One of them was sent to the temple of heaven, one to the temple of earth, another to the public ancestral temple, and the fourth to his own private temple, to announce to the deities the emperor's intention of getting married.

The day previous to the marriage the Imperial seal and the gold tablet on which was inscribed the decree making her empress were placed in a yellow pavilion and carried in great state to the house of the bride, escorted by about forty mandarins on horseback. The tablet was then delivered over to the eunuch in charge, who carried it to the apartments occupied by the bride and the ladies in waiting. A herald announced its approach, and the expectant empress came out to the door and received

It was about five in the afternoon when the procession accompanying the chair left the palace.

The chair was the usual sedan, covered with handsome yellow brocaded satin, with crimson silk tassels ornamenting the four corners, whilst the roof was gilded. It was carried by sixteen bearers dressed in the emperor's livery, which is a crimson silk robe with medallions in green, yellow, and white, black stockings and shoes. A man carrying an incense stick walked by the chair so as to regulate the time for changing bearers. Two hundred and twenty-four men were engaged in carrying the chair alone, as they changed fourteen times. For weeks before, they were obliged to take the chair out and practise carrying it, so as to be able to glide smoothly along, a cup of water being placed inside the chair to show the progress they made in the art. If the



BRINGING THE BRIDAL PRESENTS.

it kneeling. It was then placed on a table in the apartments, and whilst she continued in that humble attitude, two of the ladies opened it and read the decree on the tablet in her hearing. It was then passed to the two ladies supporting her on her left, who placed it in her hands. She then raised it to the top of her head, thereby testifying her humble and grateful submission. She then reverently passed it to the ladies on her right, who replaced it on the table in front of her whilst she prostrated herself six times. Whilst this important ceremony was going on, her mother and other relatives were obliged to kneel outside the door of the apartment. This ceremony finished, the eunuch returned the insignia (which is a piece of yellow silk on a red pole, and is always carried in state processions, and is intended to represent the emperor) to the mandarin, who returned with it to the palace. On the day of the marriage the emperor went to prostrate himself before his mother and the empress-dowager, after which he took his seat in the reception-hall, and received the prostrations of the princes and mandarins from the highest to the lowest. The member of the astronomical board then announced that the fortunate moment had arrived for the chair to leave the palace. The emperor then issued his decree to have it sent

water was spilt a flogging was administered. Each man received as his reward for these onerous duties two taels, or about thirteen shillings.

Forty of the highest officers, including Prince Kung and the fifth prince, joined in the procession. Then followed twelve white horses with yellow trappings for the ladies in attendance to ride. After that came the usual paraphernalia of richly embroidered satin umbrellas, fans, flags, rods, etc., one hundred and sixty horn lanterns hoisted on red poles, and ornamented with bats, flowers, and the character for happiness in the centre. Immediately before the chair came the Imperial triple umbrella, which was composed of yellow satin elaborately embroidered with dragons in gold and silver. The upper part of the stick was gilded, and had a peculiar bend, which denotes royalty. No sooner had this procession reached the bride's house than preparations were made for her departure. The ladies in attendance first took out the gold tablet and seal and placed them in the pavilion. The astronomical officer had again the privilege of announcing that the lucky hour had arrived, which happened to be about eleven at night. The bride was then invited to take her seat in the chair, her mother and female relations kneeling as she did so,

whilst her father's position was at the entrance gate, where he also knelt as the chair passed along. Musicians also accompanied the *cortège*, but did not beguile the time by the usual melancholy strains customary at marriage processions, but carried their instruments wrapped up in yellow silk and strapped on their backs. The procession returning was the same as the one going, with the exception of the tablet pavilion and the lighted candles, which gave a weird eerie-looking appearance to the whole spectacle.

Complete silence reigned in the streets, as every shop had to be shut, and no one was allowed on the streets along the line. The stillness was occasionally broken by the tramp of horses carrying mandarins to see that the streets were clear and the barricades kept rigidly closed. Each shopkeeper along the line was obliged to show his loyalty by hanging over the doorways a festoon of Turkey-red cloth, and keeping two red lanterns supplied with lighted candles. All along the street, at about twenty feet apart, were lighted lanterns. Mandarins of the lower grade guarded the line as well as the soldiers, but when the chair bearing the empress passed they were expected to wheel about and present their backs, as being too mean to venture to gaze even on the chair. The relays of bearers lay resting themselves on the ground, or, as opportunity occurred, stealing into an opium shop, or taking a quiet whiff to resuscitate their exhausted spirits. A great rush was made to be back to their post if the cry of an official was heard. One of the bearers received a flogging for having been caught napping.

On arriving at the outer gate of the palace, the bearers of the paraphernalia halted, the mandarins alighted from their horses, and, along with the pavilion and Imperial umbrella, preceded the chair into the palace. After passing through seven gateways, they at last arrived at the Imperial quarters. Two of the mandarins took out the tablet and seal, and placed them in the apartment which is called the Hall where Heaven and Earth meet. They then withdrew, and, the doors being closed, the ladies in waiting invited the empress to alight. The tablet was then handed to the eunuch, who had been appointed keeper of the privy seal. In this apartment a table was spread, and, when the momentous moment had arrived, the emperor entered and took his seat beside his empress.

The following day was spent in rest; but on the second day after the marriage (the 17th) the mother and dowager-empress invited the young empress to breakfast. Two tables were arranged, and the dowagers took their seats at the principal one, whilst the young empress was placed at the other. She then rose and, before they partook of the viands, prostrated herself six times to the ground. After the old dowagers had finished she repeated the prostrations. She was then invited to regale herself; when finished, for it is not supposed that under the circumstances she could have much appetite, she returned her thanks by other six prostrations, and retired to her own apartments. The court musicians performed during this ceremony. On the day following (the 18th) the emperor took his princes and high officers to express their congratulations and make their prostrations to the empress-dowager and his mother. On such a high ceremonial day he did not dare to enter beyond the outer door of their courtyard, where on the ground he prostrated him-

self. The princes and officers kept at a still more respectful distance, whilst the Mongolian and Corean princes and officers were so far removed as to be hardly visible to the naked eye. Imagination can better picture than I can describe the honourable position that is likely to be given to the other barbarian tribes who are yet to be admitted at the court of the Son of Heaven. This ceremony over, the emperor took his seat on his throne, and in his turn received their prostrations. The letters of congratulation from the mandarins in the provinces were then placed on a table in his presence. These epistles are written on yellow silk, or rather a kind of gauze, and rolled up, never folded like ordinary letters. Care must be taken to have them arrive in good time, at least a month before the ceremony takes place. Till required, for safety they are placed in one of the public offices. Then the important ceremony followed of opening the roll of the law, which is written on yellow silk, and from its pages he proclaimed to the world that he had married the empress, that she was in every way qualified to occupy the position in which he had placed her, and that he trusted they would reverence her as the mother of all under heaven. The roll was then carried to one of the balconies, and read in the hearing of the people. It was then placed in the beak of a golden bird of paradise, and allowed to drop to the ground below; but just as it was in the act of falling, and before it reached the ground, it was caught by a mandarin on a gold salver. Thus the people are taught, and expected to believe, that it is a decree which has fallen from heaven, and they must hear and obey. It was then handed over to the Board of Rites and Ceremonies to have it printed, so that it may be placarded over the city, and sent to the ends of the earth, that is, to the eighteen provinces. Whilst the emperor is thus occupied, his young empress has been patronising the concubines, and introducing them to the empress-mother and dowager. After they had finished their prostrations to them, she presented them to the emperor, which was considered an act of great condescension on her part.

The last great ceremony at the court in connection with the marriage, was the father of the empress being entertained to a feast by the emperor, and the mother by the empress-dowagers. The father took his seat at a table near by the emperor, but the Mongol and Corean princes and officers who were invited at the same time to grace the feast, were not allowed into his immediate presence. The honour of being invited was considered sufficient, so their dignified position was in the courtyard in front of the reception-hall. The distance was so great that the emperor, who presided, was not aware that they were served to a wretchedly cold collation, and the money for the charcoal pocketed by the mandarins in charge of the purveying. On this occasion the veriest rubbish was placed on the table. The cakes were made of black flour and painted to represent the finest pastry. After this sham was over the *débris*, or I might say, the whole, was sold to the beggars who gathered round the gates of the city. It would be beneath the emperor's dignity to descend from his throne and see that his guests were being entertained in a manner becoming their position. Thus the public treasury is robbed, the officers enriched whilst the guests are cold within and without. The emperor has three months of a honeymoon; the government is meanwhile carried on by the Prince of Kung,

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as regent, but after the Chinese new year, when the seals of office are again opened, on the 23rd of our February, he is expected to ascend the throne. Then must follow the tug of war on that all-momentous audience question in relation to Western Powers.

So much public money having been spent, it was of course necessary to make a great display so as to satisfy the people. For six mornings before the marriage the bride's furniture and trousseau were carried by bearers wearing the same crimson robes along the streets to the palace, all exposed to view. The first day the things were really handsome, and consisted of the empress's throne, which was made of a kind of ebony elaborately carved, with cushions of yellow satin embroidered richly with every beast, bird, or flower that was emblematic of good luck; a gigantic bedstead of the same wood, hung with yellow and crimson satin; 8 wardrobes over twelve feet high, with immense hinges and locks of gold; 4 large cheval mirrors hidden from the vulgar gaze by crimson satin curtains, with the dragon and phoenix embroidered upon them; everywhere the character for happiness (喜) had a most prominent place. Under the locks were suspended figures of women and children made in silk. These are supposed to be the keepers of the keys and guardians of the empress's wardrobe. There were 8 smaller sideboards or cabinets, 20 large boxes, 20 smaller of the same wood and equally rich in carving, 20 large boxes of red lacquer, with gold dragons, 20 smaller, 4 dressing-cases, 2 clothes rails, 2 jade stone jars, and several time-pieces. Some of the things required thirty-six and some sixteen bearers, but even with that number they were so heavy that the men could hardly move along. In all the processions, a table

on which was placed a large plate of apples was conspicuous. This is intended to represent or to bring peace and good-will to the wedded pair. On the second morning the china and gold and silver plate were carried in the same way, but as the crowd was very great the day before, they were afraid of any accident, so started with it before the day had dawned. On the other days the things were of much the same kind, but vastly inferior in quality.

Peking never looked brighter or gayer than it did on these early mornings, with the streets lined with well-dressed men, women, and children. Some were so early at their posts that one would almost fancy they had taken up their position the night before. In their eyes everything was magnificent and novel, but from a European standpoint the affair on the whole was a shabby, ostentatious display. It was announced that all Manchus married the same year as the emperor were to have a present of ten taels—hence many protracted engagements were consummated this year. Also all wearing the yellow girdle, and who are supposed to be forty-second cousins of the emperor, were to have about thirty taels' worth of satin, but as yet it has not been forthcoming. The emperor's generosity, alas! often goes beyond his means, when the poor people whose hopes have been raised are obliged to take the will for the deed. All female prisoners have been pardoned and released, and all tillers of the soil in straitened circumstances are exempted for one year from paying their land-tax. The examiners for the doctor's degree are exhorted to be a little more lavish with their favours. The aged and infirm women of the mandarin class in destitute circumstances are to be fed and clothed.

A MODEL AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL IN ITALY.

BY MARY HOWITT.

THE true John Bull, the practical Englishman, an honest and staunch reformer to the core, and fearless as a lion, but somewhat wanting in imagination and sentiment, is often, even whilst deeply interested in the political and religious emancipation of Italy, very much disposed to take a gloomy view of her future. To his positive and uncompromising mind she seems not to be in earnest. In taking possession of Rome, for instance, she has left the Pope in the Vatican, and the priest and the innovating Jesuit, like the roots of the upas-tree, everywhere in the church, in the school, in the family, and, worst of all, secretly at work in the government. What hope is there for reformation or regeneration, he argues, when the living root of the evil is retained out of fear, or, still worse, out of secret pre-dilection? According to his views, nothing short of a Cromwell, with a strong hand and an iron will, can save Italy, or put her in the right track for her salvation. She is, he says, still in a state of barbarism, still in the darkness and ignorance of the middle ages, spite of the light of science and knowledge which we possess, and which she might benefit by, if she were only in earnest and really wished to rid herself from the bondage in which the priests hold her, but which the feeble vacillating measures of her Government prove that she is not.

I mentioned something of this kind, not by any

means as my own opinion, but as the indignant outpouring of a vehement English politician to my friend the Rev. Mr. Burthaell, the London missionary to the Italian Jews, aware that he had better opportunities than myself of knowing what progress Italy was really making in political and moral reform. In reply, and as a strong argument against our English friend, Mr. Burthaell referred, as a most hopeful sign for Italy, to the efforts now being made by private individuals to work out the gradual regeneration of this beautiful land,—a land which has lain, like a slave, under the deadening, oppressive rule of many masters, and not least of the Papacy, for so many centuries, but from which she is now awaking into a knowledge of liberty and responsibility. In this way, quietly, without any noise and wholly without the aid of Government, the work of national regeneration, he said, had begun and was going on, and, like good seed, was springing up here and there. Its success was unquestionable, because a national education of this kind, quietly carried out, in no spirit of violence or aggression, and calling for no visible change, and leading to no overturning of national law, or the uprooting of old prejudices, which however it was effectually undermining—was, like the coming on of day, silent, quiet, and full of salutary influences.

As an instance of this beneficent work, Mr. Bur-

A MODEL AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL IN ITALY.

chaell instanced the model agricultural school of the Cavaliere Catani Cavalcanti, and, to enable me to make others also acquainted with it, he has kindly furnished me with the notes of a visit which he paid to this institution during the last autumn.

Seldom in Italy (says he), and scarcely in any other country, has so much been done by a single individual, entirely at his own expense, and by his own unremitting energy and attention, as by the Cavaliere Catani Cavalcanti at his agricultural model school of Castiletti, near Lipsa, about twenty miles from Florence on the Leghorn Railway.

Being anxious to see how it was conducted, I availed myself of an invitation from the proprietor to visit the establishment, in company with a friend deeply interested in an agricultural school for destitute children, near London, and a Piedmontese medical gentleman, the superintendent of a similar institution at Assissi.

A quarter of an hour's drive brought us in the first place to the entrance of the farm on which stands the Institute, and here Signor Cavalcanti, who had met us at the station, drew up to show us the interior of the gate-lodge, through and under which the road passes. The house, built on a plan of one of the students, has on the one side apartments for the lodge-keeper, whilst the other side is arranged for a hospital. There are six airy bedrooms, in communication with a beautiful loggia, over the gateway, where the convalescents can sit and enjoy the air, and which, being open to the south, commands the valley of the Arno, and being enclosed on the other side with glass, enables them still to enjoy the equally lovely view to the north, without suffering from a through draught of air. The hospital, which was quite empty, contains its own kitchen and dining-room. Fortunately, it has never yet been required for use, but the care which provided for the possibility of its need is no less admirable.

The Agricultural Institute is divided into two distinct establishments, each with its own range of buildings and its own farm attached. The "Institute," properly so called, is the higher class of school, with pupils from a higher class of life; and the "Colony," where, though the instruction is not of so advanced a character, the pupils are mostly the sons of small farmers and contadini, many of them Signor Cavalcanti's own tenants. There are in the Institute sixty-five pupils, who pay from £28 to £40 a year, according to their class. In the Colony there are twenty-five pupils, the nominal charge for whom is £16 a year, but only two or three can afford to pay so much, and about fifteen of them pay nothing, the whole cost of their maintenance being borne by Signor Cavalcanti. In both schools the pupils are lodged, boarded, clothed, and taught without paying anything, excepting for books, which all must provide at their own expense. The dress is a becoming uniform—a French *képi*, a magenta-coloured flannel Garibaldi, grey woollen trowsers, and Russian leather jack-boots. The discipline and hours are nearly the same in both establishments. All rise in the morning at half-past five o'clock and go to bed at ten; the only difference almost being, that whereas at the Institute the pupils work two hours in the day, those at the Colony work six hours; the former, who are destined to become engineers, land agents, and factors, only do so much work as is necessary to make them familiar with the practical work of farming—their chief business is to receive an advanced

technical and theoretical education; the latter, whilst deriving also a thorough technical knowledge of their business, do the entire work of the farm without any assistance whatever from hired labourers, even to the grooming of the horses and bullocks, and keeping the stables and sheds in perfect order.

The subjects of instruction for both are—history, geography, composition, letter-writing, arithmetic, geometry, physics, natural history, chemistry, and agriculture; and in the Institute, modern languages. I asked questions on different subjects in the class-rooms of the Colony, and received admirable and intelligent answers. On most of the subjects I should have been incompetent to examine—and, indeed, in the Institute education is so advanced, and the pupils are so thoroughly well grounded, that the first professors of Florence find pleasure in examining them, and the Italian Government is glad to get the students into its employment without requiring them to enter the Government schools or submit to any further examination. There are seven resident masters, and several university professors attend from Florence for weekly lectures. The architectural and ornamental drawing of the pupils is extremely neat and beautiful.

The domestic arrangements are also admirable. The dormitories are well ventilated, and each pupil is required to make his bed and keep his chest of drawers neat and orderly. There are good lavatories, and in the Institute the further luxury of a bathroom under the dormitory. The class-rooms and lecture-halls are numerous and well appointed. There is also a botanical museum in the Institute. The dietary seems to be liberal and substantial.

We had an opportunity of seeing something of the energy of the proprietor. On our arrival at the Institute he handed us over to the care of his secretary, the professor of chemistry, after which he immediately applied himself to work. Nothing escapes his eye or knowledge; all is inspected and directed by himself to the minutest particulars; and now he turned himself at once to the inspection of some plans of ironwork, required for some new buildings which were about to be erected. This done, he was off in a little carriage over the whole of the farms, and when, about two hours afterwards, we passed through his study, he was seated at his desk occupied with a number of letters preparing for the post. He ate a hasty dinner at two o'clock, and then immediately started for the train to visit some other property, where he had a number of workmen awaiting him.

The villa of Casteletti adjoins the Institute. The situation is splendid, commanding views across the plain to the mountain range running down behind Prato and Pistoia, but he seldom sleeps there. The villa is surrounded by well-laid-out grounds, tastefully planted; but the whole is overgrown, abandoned as it were to the wild and beautiful luxuriance of nature. All this is, however, explained by a monument not far from the house, which bids the stranger see, in the beauty of the spot, an evidence of the taste of one whose chief merit was her philanthropy and care for the poor around her. His wife, whose loss he mourns to the present day, was an Englishwoman, who died of cholera in 1855. Distracted with grief for her loss, he scarcely knew what to do or how to occupy himself, till after a few years it seemed to him that he could best evince his undying affection, honour her memory, and do most good, by following

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out the example of her philanthropic life, and by establishing an institution which would be of practical benefit both to her neighbours and to the country of her adoption. Out of this private sorrow has sprung up this noble institution, and since its small commencement in 1868 it has grown from year to year to its present proportions. As a money speculation it is wholly unsuccessful, costing the proprietor from £1,000 to £2,000 per annum, over and above the payment of the pupils. It was not commenced, however, in any sordid or commercial spirit, and it has, it is to be hoped, accomplished its immediate purpose, whilst it has conferred incalculable benefits upon the proprietor's own tenantry, and is sending forth to all parts of Italy young men well trained for the work of practical agriculture.

But, says the fault-finder in Italy, this model agricultural school would cut but a poor figure by the side of even a second-rate model farm in England, where modern scientific implements are in use. Here all is done in the most primitive fashion—the very plough such as was used in the days of the Roman Empire—perhaps even the Republic! The garden itself, which the English lady laid out with beautiful taste, and the trees which she planted, have all grown into a wilderness of neglect!

True, we reply, the Italians are neither gardeners in our true sense of the word, nor model farmers according to the English notion; but then, men like Signor Cavalcanti are of far more use at present in Italy by their moderation and their practical wisdom, which aims at nothing beyond the present comprehension of their countrymen; they would fail if they aimed at more.

As yet, this admirable institution has been in operation only about five years, but it has in that time sent out many soundly-educated young men, both from the Institute and Colony, to carry their practical knowledge into various parts of Italy, and year by year will continue to do so as long as it lasts. Unfortunately, it is to be feared that it may not exist beyond the life of the present proprietor. Long life, therefore, will every true friend of Italy wish to Cavaliere Catani Cavalcanti, and all such men who love their country more than their wealth, and who are willing and ready to sacrifice so much for her! Nor can there be any doubt for Italy whilst there are such true patriots within her borders.

DREAMS AND DREAMING.

VIII.—SPECTRAL ILLUSIONS, OR DAY DREAMS.

THE perception of imaginary forms and objects in our waking state, which has been the source of the popular belief in ghosts, goblins, and phantoms, and of all sorts of silly superstitions connected with them, has really nothing unaccountable, much less of the supernatural, about it. The tendency to see such appearances is simply the effect of some disease or derangement of those organs of the body which directly or indirectly influence the vision. People in perfectly sound health never see goblins or spectres, nor are, in their waking moments, visited by the forms of the absent or the dead. The mysterious visions of which the Romish Church makes such large and profitable capital, always originate with some semi-insane fanatic or half-starved ascetic, with famished blood or shattered nervous system. The much-

admired fervour of devotion which leads a St. Theresa to imagine herself holding colloquy with God, our Saviour, St. Paul, and St. Peter, is nothing more than the natural result of a long course of macerating abstinence, or other afflictive discipline, which, has destroyed the nervous energy, and so subjected the mind of the deluded devotee to the control of an over-excited imagination. On the other hand, results of a similar kind are yet more frequently produced by over-indulgence, by repletion, or by neglect of precautions necessary to the preservation of the health both of body and mind. The drunkard sees crowds of ugly phantoms in the delirium bred of his excesses; and the miserable dyspeptic with a ruined digestion has his full share of them. The case of Nicolai, the Berlin bookseller, of which a detailed account is given in the "Leisure Hour" of last year, No. 1036, is enough to satisfy any reflecting mind as to the origin of spectral illusions. He saw phantoms in crowds for two whole years together. Had he been a fool, he would have been frightened to death, or to idiocy; but he was a philosopher, and took to quietly excogitating the cause of his trouble. He found that the whole tribe of spectres were born of fulness of blood; he had recourse to leeches, and in the course of a single day all the phantoms vanished into thin air, never to appear again. The world ought to be much obliged to Nicolai for the courageous frankness which led him to publish his case, inasmuch as he thus stimulated inquiry, and assisted largely in the defeat of superstition. It may perhaps be objected by the reader that it is by no means clear that all seers of spectra are persons in ill health—that many such visions have been attested by persons whose health was notably robust. The objection would be valid could the premise be proved; but it has been found that in all such cases where the seer of visions has submitted to medical examination and treatment, some latent disease, or predisposition to disease, has been the exciting cause of the illusion. In confirmation of this assertion, we may cite, out of a multitude of instances, one related by Dr. Alderson. He tells us that he was called to a patient who was in a state of great terror, and who described himself as having been haunted for some time by spectres. He had first noticed something to be wrong with him on being laughed at by a little girl for desiring her to remove some oyster-shells from the floor. He himself stooped, and found none. Soon after, in the twilight, he saw a soldier enter the house, and not liking his intrusion, desired him to go away; but receiving no answer, he hurried forward to seize the man, and, to his horror, found the shape to be a phantom! The visitations increased by night and by day, till he could no longer distinguish real persons from imaginary ones, so definite and distinct in outline were the latter. Sometimes they took the forms of living friends, and sometimes of people long dead. Dr. Alderson resorted to a course of treatment which restored the strength of the digestive organs, and gradually banished the spectres. At the close of the account it is said the patient emphatically declared himself to have now acquired "a perfect knowledge of the nature of ghosts."

A Mr. H— (we are quoting from Dr. Macnish) was one day walking along the street, apparently in perfect health, when he saw, or supposed he saw, his acquaintance, Mr. C—, walking before him. He called aloud to the latter, who, however, did not

seem to hear him, but continued moving on. Mr. H— then quickened his pace for the purpose of overtaking him; the other increased his also, as if to keep ahead of his pursuer, and proceeded at such a rate that Mr. H— found it impossible to keep up with him. This continued for some time, till, on Mr. C— coming to the gate, he opened it, passed in, and slammed it violently in Mr. H—'s face. Confounded at such treatment, the latter instantly opened the gate, looked down the long lane into which it led, and, to his astonishment, no one was visible. Determined to unravel the mystery, he went to Mr. C—'s house; and what was his surprise when he learned that he was confined to bed, and had been so for several days. A week or two afterwards these gentlemen chanced to meet in the house of a common friend, when Mr. H— mentioned the circumstance, and told Mr. C— jocularly, that he had seen his *wraith*, and that, as a natural consequence, he would soon be a dead man. The person addressed laughed heartily, as did the rest of the company, but the result turned out to be no laughing matter; for, in a very few days, Mr. C— was attacked by putrid sore throat, and died; and within a very short period of his death, Mr. H— was also in his grave.

Early in the year 1857, an amiable industrious lad, who had just completed his apprenticeship, resolved to seek his fortune in Australia. He applied to an old friend of the writer of these papers for a passage to Van Diemen's Land in one of the vessels chartered by the Emigration Company, and in due course he sailed for Sydney. The ship had a prosperous voyage, and arrived safely in port; but, alas, without the young adventurer. One day, when the ship had run about half the distance, the sailors were cleaning her decks by order of the captain, and were making use of the hose for the purpose. Young —, always active, and willing to make himself useful, on being called upon to bear a hand, laid hold of the hose and sprang into the main-chains. In his eagerness he made a false step, and immediately disappeared over the side. At the cry of "Man overboard!" boats were lowered, and the vessel was put about. But the unfortunate lad, who had probably been drawn under the ship, never rose to the surface, and was seen no more. After a long and careful search all hopes of recovering him had to be abandoned. When the news of this calamity reached my friend, by whose instrumentality the lad was sent out, he had to perform the painful duty of imparting it to the parents of the deceased. He called, therefore, at the establishment in the City where the father was regularly employed, and found him at his labour. There was an expression of gloom on the good man's face as he saw him approach; and he hurriedly put the question whether the vessel in which his son had sailed had arrived safely. "Yes, she is safe in port." "And my son, is he quite well?" "There is nothing the matter with him now." "Has he been ill?" "No, not ill." "Then he is dead." The silence and sad looks of my friend confirmed the surmise. The father recovered the shock sooner than one would have expected, and said slowly, "I will tell you when he died." He then referred to a memorandum which he drew from his pocket, and named the day and hour exactly—allowing for the difference of latitude between London and the scene of the catastrophe—on which the fatal accident had happened. He accounted for his knowledge of the

fact in the following way: On that day he had gone home to his dinner, and was preparing to sit down to it, when his wife ran hastily into the room, and, evidently much alarmed, sank down in a chair. On his questioning her, she assured him that she had that moment seen her son in the next room, and that he had called to her, and then vanished out of her sight. The father succeeded after a time in soothing the alarm of his wife by attributing it to imagination; but he made a memorandum of that day's event, and both of them had since been anxious beyond measure to hear news of their son.

Spectral illusions, and the superstitions to which they give rise, have always been common on shipboard, and it has been suggested, with sufficient probability, that most of the terrible legends which make up the stock of marine tradition have had their origin in such sources. The tendency of sailors to see visions is attributed to their unwholesome diet and the digestive disorder it occasions, coupled with the monotonous nature of their occupation and the weird accompaniments of stormy weather. The late Captain Mott, R.N., used to relate the case of a seaman under his command. This brave man and good sailor suffered much trouble and anxiety from his superstitious fears. When on the night-watch he would see sights and hear noises in the rigging and the deep, which kept him in a perpetual fever of alarm. One day the poor fellow reported upon deck that the devil stood by the side of his hammock on the preceding night, and told him that he had only three days to live. His messmates endeavoured to remove his despondency by ridicule, but without effect. And the next morning he told the tale to Captain Mott, with this addition, that the fiend had paid him a second nocturnal visit, announcing a repetition of the melancholy tidings. The captain in vain expostulated with him on the folly of such groundless apprehensions. The morning of the fatal day was very stormy, and the man, with many others, was ordered to the topmast to perform some duty among the rigging. Before he ascended he bade his messmates farewell, telling them that he had received a third warning from the devil, and that he was confident he should be dead before night. He went aloft with the foreboding of evil on his mind, and in less than five minutes he lost his hold, fell upon the deck, and was killed upon the spot.

One of the most interesting phases of spectral illusion is that which marks the disease of calenture, the malady

"Which calls up green and native fields to view
From the rough deep, with such identity
To the poor exile's fevered eye, that he
Can scarcely be restrained from treading them."

It is a disorder which is generally attended with a degree of fever, and is supposed to be consequent on long confinement on shipboard, and a weary longing for land. It seldom attacks any but the young, and it consists of nothing more than a waking dream, accompanied by melancholy and dejection. The following case is reported by an eye-witness:—"I noticed a boy, about twelve or fourteen years of age, who stood aloof by himself with a dejected countenance, and that pale vacuity which generally indicates disease. I inquired if he was ill, and offered him an orange, but he declined it, and, folding his arms, walked away. Some little time after I

observed him seated on the windlass, with his arms still folded, steadily eyeing the deck. I pointed him out to the captain, expressing my fear that he was unwell, but when interrogated, the boy refused to acknowledge that anything was the matter with him, and again shifted his place. There was no sullenness in his manner, but rather sadness—the more remarkable that he had seemed, during the previous part of the voyage, of a playful disposition, and fond of practical jokes on his companions. After dinner, upon my return to the deck, the poor boy had again changed his seat, and was standing at the gunwale looking over at the sea, while the ship lay on the water perfectly motionless, it being then a dead calm. I asked kindly how he felt, for his face by this time had assumed an expression almost cadaverous, and he was evidently very unwell. He returned me no answer, but burst into tears, and went to another place, and looked at the sea as if he saw something in it which suddenly roused his attention. 'Take that poor fellow below,' cried one of the men, an old, rough sailor, 'the calenture has come upon him,' but, before he could be touched, the boy threw himself overboard. One of the crew instantly plunged after him and rescued him from self-destruction. Whether the freshening influence of the cool water, or the violence of the grasp with which his preserver snatched him as he sank, contributed most to recall him to a sense of himself, I know not, but when brought again on deck he wept with an uncommon profusion of tears, and at length became calm, and soon after cheerful, even with something like derision at his infirmity. He told us that he had all that day been thinking of home, until he had persuaded himself that he saw his mother's cottage in the waves, and the trees and green fields all glittering in the sunshine around it, and that he could not resist the desire to leap to them again.'

Spectral illusions are the frequent accompaniments of fever and internal inflammation, a fact which is perfectly familiar to mothers of families and others who have had experience in nursing. In December, 1823, a gentleman, a member of the English bar, was confined to his bed by inflammation of the chest, and was supposed by his medical attendant to be in considerable danger. One night, while unable to sleep from pain and fever, he saw, sitting on a chair on the left side of his bed, a female figure, which he immediately recognised to be that of a young lady who died about two years before. His first feeling was surprise, and, perhaps, a little alarm; his second, that he was suffering from delirium. With this impression, he put his head under the bed-clothes, and, after trying in vain to sleep, as a test of the soundness of his mind, he went through a long and complicated process of metaphysical reasoning. He then peeped out and saw the figure in the same situation and position. He had a fire, but would not allow a candle or nurse in the room. A stick was kept by his side to knock for the nurse when he required her attendance. Being too weak to move his body, he endeavoured to touch the figure with the stick; but, on a real object being put upon the chair, the imaginary one disappeared, and was not visible again that night. The next day he thought of little but the vision, and expected its return without alarm, and with some pleasure. He was not disappointed. It took the same place as before, and he employed himself in observations. When he shut his eyes or turned his head, he ceased to see the figure. By

interposing his hand he could hide part of it, and it was shown, like any mere material substance, by the rays of the fire which fell upon it and were reflected from it. As the fire declined, it became less perceptible, and as it went out, invisible. A similar appearance took place on several other nights, but it became less frequent as the patient recovered from his fever. He declared that the impressions on his mind were always pleasing, as the spectre looked at him with calmness and an expression of regard. He never supposed it anything but an illusion, but was unable to account for it on any philosophical principles within his knowledge.

Those who indulge in the use of opium are often visited by spectres, and much of De Quincey's dream experience, both sleeping and waking, was, we know, due to this habit. Dr. Abercrombie relates a striking instance of the kind which occurred to the late Dr. Gregory:—"He had gone to the north country by sea to visit a lady, a near relation, in whom he felt deeply interested, and who was in an advanced stage of consumption. In returning from the visit, he had taken a moderate dose of laudanum, with the view of preventing sea-sickness, and was lying on a couch in the cabin, when the figure of the lady appeared before him in so distinct a manner that her actual presence could not have been more vivid. He was quite awake, and fully sensible that it was a phantasm produced by the opiate, along with his intense mental feeling, but he was unable by any effort to banish the vision." An odd story is on record of two somewhat ancient spinsters, too much addicted to anodynes, who, sleeping in different apartments, divided one spectre between them—the head and shoulders of the goblin appearing nightly to one of them, and the other part of him to the other, and being the source of amusement, rather than of alarm, to both.

There has been but one person, so far as we are aware, who ever turned the spectral appearances by which he was visited to account in a practical way, and that one was Blake the painter and poet. This extraordinary man not only believed in his visions, but could often call up at pleasure whatever phantasms he wished to see; and so far from their being objects of annoyance, he rather solicited than wished to avoid their presence. He was in the habit of conversing with angels, demons, and heroes, and taking their likenesses; for they proved most obedient sitters, and never showed any aversion to allow him to transfer them to paper. "His mind," says Mr. Cunningham, "could convert the most ordinary occurrences into something mystical and supernatural." "Did you ever see a fairy's funeral, madam?" he once said to a lady who happened to sit by him in company. "Never, sir," was the answer. "I have," said Blake, "but never before last night. I was walking alone in my garden; there was great stillness among the branches and flowers, and more than common sweetness in the air. I heard a low and pleasant sound, and knew not whence it came. At last I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures of the size and colour of green and grey grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared. It was a fairy funeral." On being once asked to draw the likeness of Sir William Wallace, that hero immediately stood before him, and he commenced taking his portrait. Having drawn for some time,

with the same care of hand and steadiness of eye as if a living sitter had been before him, Blake stopped suddenly, and said, "I cannot finish him; Edward the First has stepped in between him and me." "That is lucky," said his friend, "for I want the portrait of Edward too." Blake took another sheet of paper and sketched the features of Plantagenet; upon which his Majesty politely vanished, and the artist finished the head of Wallace. The greater part of Blake's life was passed in beholding visions, and in drawing them. No conception was too strange or incongruous for his wild imagination, which totally overmastered his judgment, and made him mistake the chimeras of an excited brain for realities.

Varieties.

Too Soon.—In reply to "an inquirer," the story of "Too Soon," by Mrs. Macquoid, is founded upon a brief sketch published by her some years ago.

SEAMEN'S LIVES.—Mr. Plimsoll's statements, so far as they seemed to point to shipowners in the House of Commons, are to be brought before the courts of law. These charges do not affect the main purport of his book, which is to obtain better means for the protection of the seamen in merchant ships. It is not denied that hundreds of lives are lost every year from ships being unseaworthy. The "Nautical Magazine" states, that in 1872 not less than 2,000 men were lost in timber-laden ships. Most of these lost ships are heavily insured, so that the owners suffer no loss. By an Act passed last year, seamen may ask for an inspection of a ship, but they have to pay all the charges. There is every ground for the appointment of a commission of inquiry into the whole subject.

MARINE INSURANCE.—More than one case has come under my professional notice, in which the captain has received instructions from the owners, in reference to the repair and management of his ship, which were utterly unintelligible upon any other hypothesis than the desire of the owners that the vessel might be lost, so as to enable them to recover from the underwriters a sum of money far exceeding her real value.—*Sir George Stephens's Lectures on Commercial Law.*

RITUALISM A TRAINING SCHOOL FOR POPERY.—The following statement appears in the "Catholic Register":—"In England the work of conversion has continued during the past year with steady and not very slow steps. To name, or even indicate, individuals who have been received during the past twelve months would be foreign to our purpose. This much we may say, that the number of converts in London alone has been upwards of two thousand during the past year. Many, as we are informed, have joined us who are all but Catholics, and who had little need of instruction before they made up their minds to take the final, the long-deferred, but the all-needful, step. From every Ritualistic congregation in London there is a continual stream of converts drifting towards us, and the number would be increased had we priests sufficient to look after those who are hesitating as to this future step in the right direction. In various parts of the country different Anglican clergymen have been received into the Church, to the number of some ten or a dozen, and at least as many ladies connected with the various Anglican Sisterhoods have followed in the same direction. Out of every twenty Anglicans who joined the Catholic Church, not less than seventeen have been prepared for the step by the teaching they have heard from Ritualistic pulpits, and by the practices they have got accustomed to in Ritualistic churches."

THE VALLEY OF THE OXUS.—Thirty or forty years ago Lieutenant Wood, of the Indian Navy, proceeded to Kabul, through the valley of the Oxus, to its source, and he was the only European in recent times who had been over that ground. Other travellers, however, had been in adjacent districts. Mr. Hayward travelled from Cashmere, intending to reach the same point, but was murdered on the frontier. Mr. Shaw was the only living Englishman who had been to Kashgar, and he travelled from that place to Yarkand. Lately a Russian officer had gone from the North from Kokan across the outer range and to the ridge of the Trans-Alai Mountains. There was also

some very good native information. From the three or four Europeans, and seven or eight natives, we had therefore very accurate knowledge of the country. The only one portion of it that was absolutely unknown was that in the bend of the river, and this was impassable because of the physical difficulties of the country. Although the distance from Kunduz to Lake Victoria was not more than 200 or 300 miles in a straight line, there was a rise of nearly 15,000 feet. Such a fall of course gave the river a tremendous impetus, and at the bend in question it ran in a regular torrent. It, in fact, turned the spur of mountains running north-west from the Hindoo-Koosh, and was bordered by tremendous precipices. The chieftains along this part of the river had been independent from all time; no race of conquerors had ever been able to subdue them. He saw no possibility or probability of Russia ever coming down and actually occupying these districts, which never could be practically useful to any Power. They contained nothing, and were sparsely populated by an untameable people. They were quite impassable for vehicles, and almost impassable for horses. Badakshan was one of the most delightfully agreeable countries in the East. The climate was beautiful, the pastures were delicious, and of all the features of the East the most attractive here. There were also valuable mines of precious stones and metals. We had been rather taunted with giving up the famous ruby mines, but they had not been worked for many years; the country was practically abandoned, for he believed the mines were exhausted. The lapis-lazuli mines, however, were very valuable, and they were in the very heart of Badakshan. In one part there was an easy pass, but it was only one, and that was towards the Panim Steppes.—*Sir Henry Rawlinson at the Geographical Society.*

RISE IN THE PRICE OF HORSES.—Mr. Church, secretary of the London General Omnibus Association, states that in the last twelve years the Company have purchased 22,024 horses for their business; the average prices were in 1861, £25 13s.; 1862, £25 2s. 7d.; in 1871, £27 18s. 5d.; 1872, £32 17s. 8d.

NEWSPAPER STATISTICS.—From the "Newspaper Press Directory" for 1873 we extract the following on the present position of the Newspaper Press. There are now published in the United Kingdom 1,536 newspapers, distributed as follows: England : London, 285; Provinces, 889—total, 1,174; Wales, 59; Scotland, 144; Ireland, 140; Isles, 19. Of these there are—daily papers, England, 86; Wales, 2; Scotland, 12; Ireland, 24; Isles, 2. On reference to the edition of this Directory for 1862 we find the following interesting facts—viz., that in that year there were published in the United Kingdom 1,206 journals. Of these, 72 were issued daily—viz., England, 46; Wales, 1; Scotland, 9; Ireland, 14; Isles, 2; but in 1873 there are now established and circulated 1,536 papers, of which no fewer than 126 are issued daily; showing that the Press of this country has very greatly extended during the last ten years, and especially so in daily papers, the daily issues standing 126 against 72 in 1863. The magazines now in course of publication, including the quarterly reviews, number 630, of which 253 are of a decidedly religious character, representing the Church of England, Wesleyans, Methodists, Baptists, Independents, Roman Catholics, and other Christian communities.

CARMEN'S HUTS.—A very small outlay would provide at each of our London cab-stands a wooden hut or shelter, which cabmen might use when on the rank. They are exposed in all weathers, and the temptation to frequent the nearest public-house is great. In the hut they could have a fire for cooking, and a place for reading or occupying themselves in the long intervals of waiting for their turn. In Manchester and Edinburgh such shelters have been introduced, and it is a most kindly and useful way of helping a hard-working class of men.

PARK REGULATIONS.—The new rules are as follows:—"No public address shall be delivered, except in the open part of the park which is bounded by the horse-ride running from the Marble Arch to Victoria Gate, and thence to the powder magazine, and by the carriage drive running from the powder magazine along the Serpentine to Hyde Park Corner, and thence to the Marble Arch; and no such address shall be delivered in any place where the assemblage of persons to hear the same may cause obstruction to the use of any road or walk by the public, or to the use of the park by the military or Volunteers, or to the use of the park under any of the reservations contained in the Act; and no such obstruction shall be wilfully caused by any person forming part of any assemblage which may have met to hear any such address. No public address of an unlawful character, or for an unlawful purpose, may be delivered. No assembly of persons is permitted in the park unless conducted in a decent and orderly manner."

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